Simply Better!

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Self-Assessment System

Guidebook

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Introduction

The Guidebook for Conducting the Self-Assessment System will minimize the stress which comes from taking a close, structured look at yourself. If done correctly (which is more a matter of attitude than process), the Self-Assessment System (S-A-S) can help your organization identify many areas where improvements can be made; increase customer satisfaction; and help build staff morale, energy, and commitment. This will all lead to much higher buy-in and involvement when it comes time to implement changes.

Organizational self-assessments are difficult. They are time-consuming, frustrating, and often revealing of truths which we sometimes wish were left unrevealed. The decision to undertake a thorough self-assessment should not be made lightly for, while the rewards for doing it correctly are tremendous, the commitment of resources and energy can be considerable.

Before launching into gathering information in each of the seven Dimension Workbooks, your organization should be clear on why it wants to self-assess, what it expects to get out of it, and who will be committed to guiding the self-assessment all the way from start to finish. These are all important considerations that should be answered before getting started.

Taking the time to plan is essential, and there is much to consider in planning and conducting a successful self-assessment. The Self-Assessment System assumes that your organization not only wants to know where it stands in the continuum of using quality principles and practices, but it also wants to identify areas needing improvement and begin taking action to achieve leadership levels of customer satisfaction and operational results.

The Guidebook is a compendium of advice, guidance, and learning from the S-A-S field test process. It elaborates on the aspects of the process that test sites - our first customers - said would be most valuable to those who will be helping to run their organization's self-assessment.

In the Guidebook you will find information about:

- Making the Decision
- Key Players
- Planning and Conducting the Self-Assessment
- Action Planning
- Scoring Options
- Resources

Worksheets and examples from the field test experiences are provided to help as you plan and conduct the self-assessment.

Making the Decision

Making a commitment to continuous improvement takes an instant but lasts forever. The challenges are endless: what is good enough today becomes the starting point for tomorrow. Although there is no right way' to plan and conduct a self-assessment or to become a continuously improving organization, it's important to see and understand the complexity of this type of effort before jumping in head first. Before beginning the planning process, there are a few fundamental steps which you must take:

Define Your Purpose

Regardless of the assumptions built into the development of the S-A-S, every organization considering self-assessment must define its own reasons for doing it. Your organization should be clear on why it wants to do a self-assessment and what it expects to get out of it. Will this be a one-time effort? How will the information developed during the process be used? Will there be real action taken as a result of this effort? Be sure that the purpose is clearly communicated and understood by everyone in your organization.

Make a Commitment

Top management must assume ownership and responsibility for the assessment process. Clear and unambiguous commitment must be made to the purpose of the effort, completion of the process, communication of the results, and implementation of actions for improvement. The commitment of top leadership is essential for convincing staff to devote their energy and creativity to the entire process.

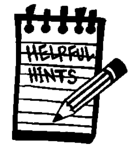
Leadership's commitment can be conveyed to staff in many ways: showing interest by being involved in kick-off and feedback sessions, appointing a coordinator who is enthusiastic and generates confidence, making sure that staff has the time to do the assessment, providing access to information and data, allocating resources to support the effort, etc. The field test sites learned that it was harder to get staff buy-in' when the commitment of their organization's top leaders wasn't clearly conveyed to staff up front.

Decide What Will Be Assessed

An organization can have many levels. It is critical, therefore, to be clear about what will be assessed. Self-assessment is appropriate for organization-wide as well as individual departments or work units as long as the organization or unit being assessed has responsibility for defining its mission and strategic planning.

Any lack of understanding about which level or part of the organization is being assessed has the potential to cause great confusion and inconsistencies among team members, particularly where there is staff from different levels or units working on the same dimension. Clarify this aspect of self-assessment at the beginning in order to avoid any misunderstanding later.

In Their Own Words . . .



The field test sites and their observers learned a great deal about what makes a self-assessment successful:

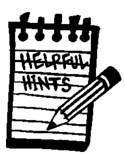
- Plan enough time — don't rush.
- Find good facilitators.
- Don't underestimate your staff.
- Make it clear to staff that all staff can participate in any Dimension.
- It's not necessary to have expert knowledge; their perception counts, too.
- Explain each step and how it relates to the big picture.
- Make sure your organization's mission and goals are well communicated and understood by all participants.
- Depth of Director's buy in - get total commitment and make sure it continues through the process.
- Be flexible in your orientation.
- Be flexible in scheduling; clear sufficient time in advance, not the last minute.
- Make sure the process is voluntary; if someone doesn't want to be involved, they can wreck the process.
- Clear staff's schedules with their supervisors and follow up.
- Provide thank you letters of appreciation for efforts made.
- Back off coordinator's time from other things; limit impact of other jobs
.
- Small group dynamics are important; 6-7 on a team was better than 3-5 (who got overwhelmed).
- Heterogenous mixed groups added synergy.
- Provide continuous feedback to people involved, showing how everybody's input is being used. It builds trust.
- There is no going back; we have to use this information; too many people know.
- Make sure dimension teams have the materials they need well enough in advance and that they are ready to go to work.
- Deal with negative feelings in dealing with change; continually reinforce limits, guidelines, and kinds of actions.
- Spend some more time on front-end scheduling and discussion; make sure "why do it?" value is noted.

The Key Players

Self-Assessment Coordinator

Conducting self-assessment through a full-staff, team-based approach is a process that requires careful planning, involves many people, and may occur over several weeks or months. For the self-assessment to go smoothly, an organization should appoint or hire a coordinator to manage the overall assessment process.

The Coordinator has the most time-consuming job in the self-assessment process. Coordinators are responsible for managing the process which includes: winning leadership's as well as staff members' commitment to doing the S-A-S; designing the time line and the best process to meet the needs and expectations of management and staff; providing support to the facilitators, the observer, and those doing the self-assessment; selecting contractors and trainers if necessary; and championing the self-assessment process and the implementation of the final action plans.



The field test coordinators had some helpful hints about what coordinators need:

- A clear mandate from management.
- Sufficient time, resources, and access.
- A clear understanding of the organization and all its parts.
- Clear expectations of the process.
- An understanding of the larger aspects of continuous improvement.
- A variety of skills, including excellent facilitation and group process skills, especially communication.
- Background knowledge to provide guidance to staff as they work through the self-assessment.
- High self-esteem, and a thick skin.
- Selling and negotiation skills.
- A sense of humor.
- The ability to keep the process and the people going.
- Personal buy-in to the S-A-S.
- Planning and organizing skills, especially the ability to manage time and juggle multiple items.
- Time to work long hours.
- Free reign to handle logistics.
- Information on selecting or hiring facilitators, observers, or consultants.
- Access to Simply Better! resources.
- Power to assign people and recruit volunteers.
- Ability to travel as needed.

Facilitators

The success of the self-assessment process depends on teams using a consensus decision-making. Consensus means that, even though individual team members may not be completely satisfied with a decision, everyone can live with it and will support it. In consensus-building all team members ideas or opinions are listened to openly, there is discussion of all points of view, and there is the opportunity for team members to work to find better decisions which meet all of their concerns.

In order to help meetings run smoothly and keep teams on task, objective facilitators should work with the individual teams completing each dimension. Facilitators can come from either inside or outside of the organization and should have attributes such as: basic facilitation skills, including consensus-building; a sound understanding of continuous improvement; a clear understanding of the Self-Assessment System and the specific process being used; and background knowledge of the organization.

Observers

An observer is someone from outside of the organization who helps to document the assessment process. The observer can play an invaluable role by providing objective third-party feedback on what works and what doesn't. Those who are caught up in the process of doing are often hard pressed to take the necessary time out to document the process.

The person selected as an observer must understand the self-assessment process and the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved. They must also have the full support and confidence of the process leaders and acceptance by the staff doing the self-assessment.

The field tests described the ideal observer as a neutral and objective participant, available for all or most meetings and team sessions, a perceptive listener, an insightful reporter and scribe, and a good communicator.

Outside Consultants

While not necessary to a successful change process, a consultant can serve as a guide on a continuous improvement journey or as a valuable ally in structuring and conducting a self-assessment. The most successful consultant will have a good working relationship with leaders in the organization and the ability to work with staff at all levels.

When deciding whether or not to hire a consultant, list out the skills and areas of expertise which are essential to succeeding in your next steps. Look throughout the organization to see if there are people in-house who can meet these needs and have the time to do so. If there are gaps, you may want to go outside for help. Speak with colleagues in your community to find out who has the skills and knowledge you need. Be sure to talk with people who have worked with the consultants, and be sure to have a number of people in your organization talk with the candidates. A consultant, no matter how qualified, who does not mesh with the people in the organization can easily turn into a waste of money.

Planning and Conducting the Self-Assessment

Planning the Self-Assessment

Decide Who Will Be Involved

The Self-Assessment System has been designed as a team-based process. We strongly recommend that it be conducted by teams of staff who represent a cross-section of units, teams, or functions within your organization. Generally, the more people involved in continuous improvement, the greater the chance of success.

Some options for conducting the self-assessment are:

Involve the entire organization by having everyone participate on at least one team looking at one or more of the seven dimensions. Staff can assign themselves to teams on a voluntary basis or be assigned by random assignment.

Involve key departments or units by assigning the completion of different or overlapping dimensions to each.

Recruit two to seven teams to be responsible for completing one or more of the dimensions.

Charter a single cross-functional team to complete all aspects of the self-assessment. This can prove to be stressful, however, and certainly minimizes the extent of broad-based employee involvement.

Involve everyone and create new teams when it's time to begin the action planning.

The field test process/field test sites demonstrated that each of the options can be successful. In general, the process went more smoothly and with greater success when there was a high level of voluntary staff involvement.

Set a Schedule

Develop an overall time line showing the time necessary to complete the self-assessment. The completion time will depend on a number of variables, including the organization of the teams, depth of research undertaken, ability of teams to reach consensus, and the number of vital issues chosen for specific action planning.

The self-assessment can be scheduled in a number of ways.
Some options are:

- Do it **all at once** by conducting self-assessment in a short, defined time frame. If separate teams with non-overlapping members were each assigned to complete one dimension, the entire process might be completed over a 2-day time span.

- Stagger it **over time** so that group members have time to keep up with other work or a single group has time to cover multiple dimensions. Completing one dimension per week would extend the time to about two months.

- Complete a **partial assessment**. While not the ideal, focusing on and completing one or two key areas might help to make the process much more manageable for smaller organizations.

The field test sites found that, on average, it took about four hours to complete each dimension, with additional time needed for orientation, progress meetings, and action planning. The time involved for the coordinator, facilitator, and observer can be considerable.

Conducting the Self-Assessment

Now that your organization has decided to embark on the self-assessment process, the key players (coordinator, facilitators, and observer) have all been selected, and some initial planning has taken place, what's next? Every self-assessment will be unique, but there are a number of common elements. This section has some pointers and exercises to help you find the way through your own self-assessment process.

We also asked the field test sites and observer organizations to reflect on their experiences and to offer their insights on some of the ingredients to doing a successful self-assessment.

The exercises in the next several pages are not highly detailed, as they are variations on standard techniques, which can be acquired from a number of sources. A stable of group facilitation tools will be invaluable. If you do not have access to trained facilitators, there are several books with activities which anyone can use. Be sure facilitators have had at least some training with helping groups brainstorm and come to consensus.

Handing Out Material

The first book in the self-assessment package (with the colored cover) is both a marketing and teaching tool. Give it to as many people in the organization as possible, from directors to front-line staff. The book provides important information and includes The Preview, which will help everyone learn what continuous improvement and self-assessment are all about. It also will put the process into a broad context and give everyone a common frame of reference. Senior managers and decision-makers should probably see the booklet early in the planning process. For most of the staff, the orientation meeting is an ideal time to hand it out.

Most of the field test sites prepared their own handouts or overheads. People need to understand how the self-assessment is relevant to their organization and their lives. Customized handouts go a long way towards accomplishing this. Remember, part of the orientation is marketing, so be sure that all of your material is easy-to-read and professional. Pages of courier type will probably not be effective.

The Orientation

Since the self-assessment will involve the entire organization, care should be taken to fully communicate the purpose and process to all staff up front in the process. Staff who will be involved as team members should be provided with a walk-through of the entire process, along with a review of some of the terms and concepts used for scoring. An orientation meeting is a good opportunity to clarify key terms such as: quality, customer, continuous improvement, and performance; to understand the scoring system; and to do The Preview.

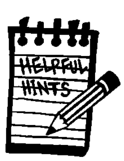
Make the orientation more than a lecture by designing group activities which will get employees' interest and begin to develop buy-in. This is partially a learning experience and partially a sales meeting, so it should be designed to be informative and fun with a clear focus on helping people understand how self-assessment and continuous improvement are important to them and their jobs.

You may want to try one of these exercises:

• Brainstorm and discuss the meaning of several key terms that will be used throughout the self-assessment. The terms "quality, customer, and customer satisfaction" are good places to start.

• Brainstorm around the question "what needs to happen for you to feel that self-assessment is a success?" This question will surface many fears and expectations that should then be discussed in order to generate buy-in and assure a successful process.

• People may not be forthcoming about their true expectations or feelings. Have everyone write down what they expect will happen with the results of the process and ask them to keep the paper until all of the dimensions have been completed and the action plans developed. At a wrap-up meeting, ask them the same question. Have people read their answers to the group. This exercise will demonstrate the coordinator's faith in the process up front and reveal the degree of learning and growth at the end of the process.



What the field test sites said:

"Do an orientation. It's vital to the success of the self-assessment that all staff understand the purpose for doing a self-assessment and have a clear understanding of the commitment, expectations, concepts, procedures, and schedule for the process."

"Kick it off with a splash. Be creative. An orientation meeting is a great time to show commitment by your organization's leaders and get the buy-in of employees."

"Plan an event that's fun and exudes enthusiasm and energy. Provide treats and snacks."

The Preview

The Preview, which is located in the Overview booklet, will give a quick glimpse of what continuous improvement and the self-assessment are all about. It is a quick, focused tool to help people see the seven dimensions of self-assessment and introduce the many interconnected concepts related to operating a high quality, continuously improving organization. When used as part of the orientation The Preview has been described as "an eye-opener, a tool to bring in all staff, and the beginning for frank and open discussions on issues."

The Preview can also be used by PIC boards, frontline staff, local partners, service providers, non-profits, employers, local education, and any organization or team with a mission. It is extremely flexible: people can fill it out individually or in small groups and complete it in about twenty minutes. Think seriously about using it in the orientation meeting. While many facilitators are uncomfortable about having their groups work for such a long time, it has proven time and again to be highly effective in workshops and orientations.

Many of the field test organizations used crayons for The Preview. This is an easy way to demonstrate that the S-A-S is different and that the actual process is easy (although the thinking is hard!). Some organizations may not have a culture which will readily accept crayons; some may have environments in which people will be afraid to use an identifiable color when filling in the thermometers. Be sure to be sensitive to people's comfort levels.

The results of The Preview can be made public or kept private. Again, the culture of the organization and the comfort level of its people will play a big role in that decision.

After the dimensions have been completed, consider having the staff take The Preview again. Often, the results will change significantly as people gain a better understanding of what continuous improvement is all about and, more importantly, a better understanding of their organization.

The First Dimension

If your organization decides to use a number of teams to complete the seven dimensions, an excellent approach for ensuring consistency is to involve the entire larger group in completing the first category on Customer Focus and Satisfaction. Once everyone has experienced the process and has discussed the terms used, the smaller teams are ready to divide up the work and begin.

Since most team work is best accomplished by a group no larger than ten, getting a much larger number of staff to work on a single dimension will requires some planning. One way for coordinators to do this might be to ask each dimension team to complete the Customer Focus and Satisfaction Workbook and then have each team share its scores and results with the larger group. A facilitated discussion after the team reports could be focused on terms, concepts, process, and results. If time were a concern, another approach might be for all dimension teams to complete just one section of the Customer Focus and Satisfaction dimension before sharing their scores and results.

“A great way to promote common understanding of the entire process and to clarify important terms is to have all group members do the first dimension together. Because so much of the overall assessment is directed toward meeting customers’ needs and expectations, this is the perfect place to begin.”

Following the Plan

Be sure to support the teams as they work to complete their individual dimensions. Stick to commitments for making time, space, information, and resources available and remember to be flexible where it will contribute to the overall success of the project. It is important, however, to be flexible in making the S-A-S work. Remember the word Kaizen: make the little improvements every day in everything you do, including the self-assessment!

Do not let support for the process slip. The staff needs to see the support and commitment of the coordinator and, more importantly, top management at all times.

People will want to know how it’s going. Don’t leave anyone in the dark. Provide periodic progress reports and bring everyone together at the completion of the dimensions to hear the conclusions and the recommendations for opportunities for improvement.

Bringing it all together

Taking action in areas identified for improvement is what continuous improvement is all about. Take this opportunity to open the process back up to everyone. Invite them into the action planning and implementation process. Let everyone take pride in being part of an organization that is committed to getting better and better.

The Planning Form that follows was helpful to the Field Tests. Use it to make your planning easier and ensure that you have covered all critical areas.

The blank Planning Form is followed by a completed plan developed by The Private Industry Council (Portland, Oregon) for conducting their self-assessment.

Self-Assessment Planning Form

A. Buiding Commitment and Buy-In

Our Statement of Purpose for undertaking the Self-Assessment:

Senior leaders will show strong commitment to the self-assessment by doing the following:

The involvement and commitment of staff will be obtained by:

B. Strategic Planning

For the Self-Assessment to be successful, you will need a well thought-out strategic plan. This plan should take into consideration time lines, staff resources, your organizational culture, etc.

What are some of the qualities of your self-assessment process?
What is its rhythm?

High-paced	Energetic	Thoughtful
Invigorating	Challenging	Cautious
Accelerating	Straightforward	Constant
Purposeful	Calculated	Fun
Continuous	Incremental	Pragmatic
Enduring	Flexible	Other

What are the major components of your self-assessment process?
The last major step should be create an action plan.

What are the major areas of concern? What do you have to watch for?

C. Nuts and Bolts

The Self-Assessment will begin on _____ and be completed by _____.

The Self-Assessment will be coordinated by ____________________.

The first five activities in the Self-Assessment process will be

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

The orientation session(s) will be conducted by:

D. CREATING TEAMS

The Self-Assessment System is designed for teams. There are many ways of completing the assessment. Spend time thinking about what makes sense for your organization.

Who will be given an orientation to the self-assessment? When will it be done?

Who will complete The Preview? All staff? Managers? Those working on dimensions? When will it be done?

Who will complete the dimensions? A few teams? The entire staff? Seven teams?

How will people be selected for teams? Will they be volunteers? Will they be assigned? Will they be cross-functional?

When must the dimension teams be finished?

At a minimum, teams are responsible for:

Teams will have support from:

- ○ Outside facilitators
- ○ Internally trained facilitators
- ○ No facilitated assistance
- ○ Other

Facilitators' responsibilities include:

E. ACTION PLANNING

Collecting the results from the Seven Dimensions is really the start of deciding where to go as an organization. Using the information to make decisions and an action plan is critical.

If different teams analyzed different Dimensions, how will the results be brought together to make sense of the whole?

Creating an action plan will be the responsibility of:

- ○ A special team
- ○ The entire organization
- ○ Several teams
- ○ Leadership/Management
- ○ Other

Details of the process to be used:

The action plan will be completed by:

How will we decide whether (and when) to conduct another self-assessment?

Case Study: A Completed Plan

The following plan was used by The Private Industry Council (TPIC) for guiding their self-assessment process.

A. Building Commitment and Buy-In

Our Statement of Purpose for Undertaking the Self-Assessment:

We want to learn, as an organization, more about our strengths (things we do well) and possible weaknesses (opportunities for improvement) on how we make decisions, use information, and measure success. The result of this self-assessment will be action plans which we can use to develop systems to maintain our strengths and take advantage of opportunities to make changes which will add to our list of strengths.

Senior leaders will show strong commitment to the self-assessment by doing the following:

Senior leaders will be given an opportunity to review the self-assessment material and the implementation plan. These senior leaders (members of the Strategic and Operations Committees) will also review this strategic plan so they can provide input. All senior leaders will complete The Preview and most will be members of one of the seven assessment groups.

The involvement and commitment of staff will be obtained by:

• Introduction by Dennis Cole (TPIC President). This will include: giving the history / purpose of Simply Better!, context of why we (TPIC) are participating in this process; the value of the self-assessment; and commitment to develop action plans based upon the results of the self-assessment. (Since this process is time-intensive, it would also be helpful if we could identify ways where time saving could result by participating in this process. For instance: if, as a result of this process we were able to identify ways to reduce MIS or fiscal paperwork, the time spent participating in work groups or just doing the Preview would be offset by these time savers.)

• Orientation to assessment process by Maureen, Vice-President and Phil, (Analyst).

• Ground rules: No wrong answers / no pre-assumptions of Preview or the Seven Dimension results / anonymity guaranteed / honesty encouraged.

• All staff will have the opportunity to participate in completing The Preview.

• All staff will have the opportunity to participate in one of the seven assessment teams.

• All staff will have the opportunity to comment on the assessment team results and action plans.

• All staff will complete The Preview again upon reviewing the assessment group results / action plans.

• All staff will have a role in carrying out the resulting action plans.

• Results from the action plans will be communicated to all staff on a regular and frequent basis.

B. Strategic planning

What are the major components of your self-assessment process?

• Buy-in by management.
• All staff participating wherever and whenever possible.
• Assessment at regular and meaningful intervals.
• Action plans which relate to areas covered in one of the seven dimension assessment tools. The action plans which are developed must also be "do-able", realistic, involve all staff to some extent, be measurable, and be reported on a regular basis. There may be subsequent action plans which result after the assessment process - these too should involve all staff, measurable and reported upon.
• Reporting outside of the organization on our successes.

What are your major areas of concern?

• Initial buy-in but no long term support.
• Action plans are "shot down" by staff / management. (Disempowerment)
• Results are not shared with all staff.
• Getting too busy to carry out action plans.
• Making mistakes is still wrong. Finger pointing continues. Compliance with regulations is more important than participant success.

C. Nuts and Bolts

The Self-Assessment will begin on June 5 and be completed June 19.

The Self-Assessment will be coordinated by Maureen and Phil.

The first five activities in the Self-Assessment process will be:

1) Get President's buy in to self-assessment process.
2) Schedule two half-day staff meetings (June 5 and June 19).
3) Have staff complete The Preview and summarize the results. (June 5)
4) Ask for volunteers from staff to participate on one of the seven dimension review committees. (Each committee should have at least one of each: Direct Service, Admin., and Management) (Individual groups will meet sometime between June 5 and June 14.)
5) Staff reviews (June 19) committee results and completes The Preview again. Each committee should be prepared to present their results. Determine who is participating in the action plan, what results are expected and when results should be reported.

The orientation session will be conducted by Maureen and Phil. This will occur after Dennis provides the context of the assessment process, defines the role of staff, and connects to taking action on the results.

Maureen and Phil will provide additional orientation to each of the seven dimension teams to help them get started and understand what results are expected. Maureen and Phil will also be available to answer questions as they arise.

D. Creating Teams

Receives the Self-assessment Orientation:	All Staff	Due: 6/5
The Preview	All Staff	Due: 6/5
All Seven Dimensions	Volunteer Staff (Direct Service / Admin. / Management)	Due: 6/14
Reviewing Results / Action Plans	All Staff	Due: 6/19
Ongoing Efforts	Special Teams	Continuous
Re-doing the Locator	All Staff	Due: 6/19

At a minimum teams are responsible for:

• Taking the process seriously / being honest / honoring commitments / being involved / listening to other team members / developing action plans / present results on June 19

Teams will have support from:

Teams will have support from Maureen and Phil. Outside facilitation will be provided during the June 19 meeting where we meet again as a group to review the results. Darcy Hitchcock or Marsha Willard will be good choices to conduct this process. They are both good at collecting group opinions and summarizing comments.

E. Action planning

If different teams analyzed different dimensions, how will the results be brought together to make sense of the whole?

• An all staff meeting will be convened June 19 and facilitated by Darcy or Marsha.

Creating an action plan will be the responsibility of:

• Several teams. Based upon the results of the all staff meeting on June 19.

The action plan (final) will be completed on July 14.

How will we decide whether (and when) to conduct another self-assessment?

• Recommend that we plan to do another quick Preview assessment during the June 19 meeting. Team will re-do a dimension every six months and report out.

Action Planning

The Self-Assessment System was designed to be an evaluative tool for employment and training organizations to determine their current quality across a range of organizational dimensions. The results provide organizations with a frame of reference for identifying and ranking opportunities for improvement. Action planning is the critical step in making the link from opportunities to action and in confirming to those involved that doing the assessment was a worthwhile investment of their time and resources.

Creating an action plan can help to:

Develop clear and concise goals and tasks for redesigning a service or process to be improved.

Encourage organized thinking around achieving your goals and tasks.

Develop a systematic plan for implementing the redesign.

Evaluate the success of your redesign efforts.

The Self-Assessment Dimension Workbooks provide seven specific action planning and action taking steps at the end of each booklet. This seven-step model for improving a service or process is the subject of Simply Better!'s publication "Service by Design." In their simplest form, the seven steps are:

- **Select** the service or process to be improved.
- **Describe** the current process.
- **Determine** the wants, needs, and expectations of the customers of the service or process.
- **Gather** data to determine the extent to which the current process meets the wants and expectations.
- **Redesign** the improved process to meet the wants, needs, and expectations.
- **Implement** the improvement.
- **Manage** the process of change.

These steps are explained more fully in each Dimension Workbook.

Once your organization's vital few opportunities for improvement have been identified, there are several ways to organize action planning itself. Getting employees involved in devising solutions and approaches is the key to any option chosen. Remember that line staff play a critical role in translating the plan into quality service delivery. Be ready to provide staff with the information and technical skills necessary to meet the new expectations. And, as with the self-assessment process, there must be commitment by senior leaders, constant communication about progress, and celebration of success.

This exercise will help you to break out of gridlock' when trying fully to describe the service or process to be improved. It is adapted from "Seven Steps for Breaking Through Organizational Gridlock" by Daniel Kim, in the Fifth Discipline Fieldbook. Please see the bibliography for more on this invaluable resource.

This will help not only with "organizational gridlock" but with "creative gridlock" as well. Teams will develop solutions which take into account the complex interrelationships throughout organizations and systems.

Step 1

After choosing the service or process phrase the opportunity as a symptom. For example, the team may have written "improve accuracy of intake forms." The symptom would be "intake forms often have inaccuracies."

Step 2

Map out the "quick fixes". What has been done in the past? List out everything which has been done to try to solve the problem over the years (assuming things have been done!). One quick fix may have been to have each form double-checked when customers meet with case workers.

Step 3

Identify undesirable impacts (including impacts on others). Have any of those solutions affected others? In this example, the time it took to go over the forms took time from the customers, reducing the amount and quality of assistance they receive.

Step 4

Identify fundamental solutions. What are the root causes of the inaccuracies? Ask "why does this happen;" and, when you have an answer, ask "Why does the answer happen;" and so on. Pretty soon you will dig deeply into the problem. Be sure to look at the situation from everyone's perspective: the customer, the intake worker, the case worker, and the MIS person. Any part of the system which may be affected, even indirectly, must be considered.

Scoring Options

Continuous improvement involves ongoing use of the cycle of planning, execution, and evaluation. This generally requires that there be a quantitative measurement system used to record both current levels of operation and new levels after changes are made. The Self-Assessment System has been designed not only to help identify strengths and opportunities for improvement, but also to provide an organization with the means to create a numeric score representing its current position along the continuum of becoming a high-performance organization.

Scoring the Self-Assessment System provides a useful frame to facilitate an in-depth understanding that can guide continuous improvement efforts. It does this in several ways:

Create Baseline Measures
It creates a set of baseline measures that can be used within the organization as reference points in future self-assessments.

Focus on Highs and Lows
It provides important information about which sections of particular Dimensions are especially high or low thus helping to identify areas that could benefit the most from improvement activities.

Establish Priorities
It provides perspective across the Dimensions and the organization about relative weights or priorities - thus helping once again to identify where an organization might wish to place its improvement resources.

Compare with Others
It provides a score that is comparable to that used in many, many other quality programs, thus providing the opportunity to compare ones own organization with others throughout business, industry, and government.

Scoring the Sections

Each of the seven dimensions is made up of several sections which define key aspects of quality management. At this level, scoring is about developing a team group consensus for each section based on the scores for the individual questions within the section. The questions themselves are often broken into sub-parts for scoring in order to consider two different aspects: the approach, or system of procedures, your organization uses and the extent of implementation by the organization. The scoring scales themselves have been developed to display a continuum ranging from not doing quality to world-class.

What does a score mean?

The self-assessment process is not designed to demonstrate how good you are. Rather, it is designed to show how far along you are on the road to continuous improvement. Continuous improvement and customer focus are relatively new concepts for many organizations. This does not mean that your past good performance is any less important — it is, in fact, a foundation on which you can build. Many organizations which pride themselves on being continuously improving may find that their scores are consistently in the 40% - 60% range. Those who are just beginning to use systematic approaches will find their score in the 20% - 40% range. Very few organizations of any type in the world, including some of the most successful private corporations, are consistently in the 80% - 100% range, and they have been at this for years.

The section scores can be used in several ways as noted above depending upon the wishes of your organization. For many organizations, the percentage scores developed in the dimension workbooks provide enough information. All that remains is to bring all the scores together in one place.

The Scoring Summary form on the next page can be used to record the scores that were developed by each Dimension Team.

Scoring Summary

	Overall Dimension Score	Section Score
Customer Focus and Satisfaction	________	
Customer Expectations		________
Customer Service and Quality Standards		________
Customer Relationship Management		________
Determining Customer Satisfaction		________
Customer Satisfaction Results		________
Leadership	________	
Senior Leadership		________
Leadership System and Organization		________
Public Responsibility and Citizenship		________
Information and Analysis	________	
Management of Information and Data		________
Comparisons and Benchmarking		________
Analysis and Use of Data		________
Strategic Planning	________	
Strategy Development		________
Strategy Deployment		________
Human Resource Development	________	
Human Resource Planning and Evaluation		________
High Performance Work and Job Design		________
Employee Education, Training, and Development		________
Employee Well-Being and Satisfaction		________
Management of Process Quality	________	
Design and Introduction of Services		________
Service Delivery		________
Administrative Services		________
Contractor Performance		________
Quality and Results	________	
Service Quality Results		________
Outcome Results		________
Contractor Performance		________

Scoring for External Comparison

As noted previously, one of the uses for scoring is to provide a comparison of your organization with others throughout business, industry, and government which have used compatible scoring systems.

One highly recognized and widely used approach to scoring has been developed for the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award. It has also been adopted and is in use in over 30 State quality award programs. This system is based on 1,000 possible total points which are distributed in varying amounts across each of the seven categories (the dimensions of the S-A-S). The amounts assigned to the categories represent the relative importance of each area in its contribution to the overall performance of an organization.

For Baldrige, attention to customer satisfaction and attainment of results are considered to be of the highest importance. Consequently, these two categories are each assigned 250 points, thus accounting for one-half of the total points available.

Using the Baldrige point distribution, you can determine your organization’s numeric score by completing the tables below. The ‘Team Score’ was determined by each team as it completed each section within the seven dimensions.

LEADERSHIP — 90	Point Values x Team Score = Points Earned
Senior Leadership	45 x ________ = _______
Leadership System	25 x ________ = _______
Public Responsibility	20 x ________ = _______
Total Points Earned	

STRATEGIC PLANNING — 55	Point Values x Team Score = Points Earned
Strategy Development	35 x ________ = _______
Strategy Deployment	20 x ________ = _______
Total Points Earned	

INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS — 75	Point Values x Team Score = Points Earned
Management of Information/Data	20 x ________ = _______
Comparisons and Benchmarking	15 x ________ = _______
Analysis and Use of Data	40 x ________ = _______
Total Points Earned	

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT — 140	Point Values x Team Score = Points Earned
H/R Planning and Evaluation	20 x ________ = ________
High Performance Work Systems	45 x ________ = ________
Employee Education, Training, and Development	50 x ________ = ________
Employee Well-being and Satisfaction	25 x ________ = ________
Total Points Earned	

MANAGEMENT OF PROCESS QUALITY — 140	Point Values x Team Score = Points Earned
Design and Introduction of Services	40 x ________ = __________
Service Delivery	40 x ________ = __________
Administrative Services	30 x ________ = __________
Contractor Performance	30 x ________ = __________
Total Points Earned	

QUALITY AND RESULTS — 250	Point Values x Team Score = Points Earned
Service Quality Results	75 x ________ = __________
Outcome Results	130 x ________ = __________
Contractor Performance	45 x ________ = __________
Total Points Earned	

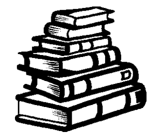
CUSTOMER FOCUS AND SATISFACTION — 250	Point Values x Team Score = Points Earned
Customer Expectations	50 x ________ = __________
Customer Service Standards	50 x ________ = __________
Customer Relationship Management	50 x ________ = __________
Determination of Customer Satisfaction	50 x ________ = __________
Customer Satisfaction Results	100 x ________ = __________
Total Points Earned	

OVERALL SCORING SUMMARY

Dimension	Available Points	Earned Points	Percent of Total Points Earned
Leadership	90	______	______
Strategic Planning	55	______	______
Information and Analysis	75	______	______
Human Resource Development	140	______	______
Management of Process Quality	140	______	______
Quality and Results	250	______	______
Customer Focus and Satisfaction	250	______	______
Total Points Earned			

Now that you have developed a score using the Malcolm Baldrige Quality Award framework, you will be able to use it both as a guide to identify what areas might benefit most from continuous improvement efforts and as a basis for comparing yourself against others or your own organization if the self-assessment is repeated.

RESOURCES



Some Tools and Techniques

There are a number of commonly recognized tools and techniques which can be used to help your organization plan, manage, diagnose, evaluate, and improve current or future functions. These tools and techniques are fully described in a wide number of available publications; therefore, only the short descriptive summary is provided here. The specific application of many of these tools in a workforce development environment can be found in Simply Better!'s publication "Quality Operations."

Affinity Diagram is used to gather and organize a large body of apparently unstructured and unorganized ideas. Initially ideas are generated in a manner similar to brainstorming; then, they are clustered into categories.

Brainstorming is a technique for a group of people to generate original ideas without fear of criticism or rejection.

Cause and Effect Diagram is a chart resembling a fish skeleton which assists to identify the probable causes of a specific problem or situation. Possible causes are brainstormed and represented as ribs on the skeleton. Continually asking the question "why" is the key to determining root causes of problems.

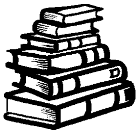
Consensus within a group means that all members can support the idea or proposal even though every individual member may not be fully satisfied. In team work, consensus is always preferred over voting.

Focus Group is made up of a limited number of customers who participate in a structured group interview format lead by a moderator. The focus group provides a means for discussion, generation of ideas, and customer feedback.

Force-Field Analysis is a technique for examining the opposing forces to change. Driving forces and restraining forces are displayed pictorially to indicate the relative number and strength of the various forces affecting possible change.

Histogram is a bar graph that displays numerical information about the frequency of distribution of continuous data.

Multi-Voting is a structured technique for reducing a large number of ideas to a manageable few. Members first vote for all items they want to be kept on the list. All items that receive a majority are moved to the next round of voting where each member is given three votes to select a favorite. The three votes can be applied to different or the same item. The process continues until the appropriate number of items remain.



Nominal Group Technique/Ordinal Ranking is a technique enabling individuals to identify ideas and then rank them by order of importance. Each team member numbers the list of ideas in rank order and the idea with the highest total score is considered to be most important to the overall team.

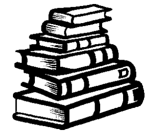
Pareto Chart is a bar diagram in which displays problems by their frequency of occurrence. The bars are arranged by frequency in ascending order to visually highlight the relative impact of each problem.

Process Mapping is a technique to illustrate how a process currently works. Inputs, outputs, flow of activity, and work unit involvement are displayed through time.

Run Chart is a simple graph of trend data displayed over time.

Scatter Diagram is a graphic display of occurrences when one variable or process interacts with another. Such diagrams are often used to discern negative or positive relationships between the two variables. When clustered data points are separated into meaningful categories, the technique is referred to as stratification.

A Brief Bibliography



Books, books, books! The shelves are overflowing with information on continuous improvement, TQM, re-engineering, customer service, performance systems, and the information age. How can you make sense of it all?

This is by no means a comprehensive bibliography (they are always so overwhelming), but it will get you started. These books are our favorites for a variety of reasons. Try them out, flip through their bibliographies, ask friends, or do what we do sometimes: go to the bookstore and pick out something that looks good!

Leadership is an Art
Max De Pree (Dell, 1989)

Max De Pree's guiding philosophy and the lesson to be learned from this remarkable short book, is best said in his own words: "Leaders owe a covenant to the corporation or institution, which is, after all, a group of people. Leaders owe the organization a new reference point for what caring, purposeful, committed people can be in the institutional setting. Notice I did not say what people can do - what we can do is merely a consequence of what we can be. Corporations, like the people who compose them, are always in a state of becoming. Covenants bind people together and enable them to meet their corporate needs by meeting the needs of one another."

Zapp! The Lightning of Empowerment
William C. Byham, Ph.D. (Harmony Books, 1992)

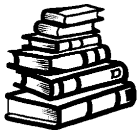
A short, easy, fun to read book, written as a contemporary fable about how to create and maintain empowered employees.

The Wisdom of Teams
Jon R. Katzenbach and Douglas K. Smith (Harvard Business School Press, 1993).

The authors share the results of extensive field study about the secrets of forming, serving on, and leading productive teams. Dozens of stories and case examples serve to differentiate levels of group and team performance, where and when teams work best, and how to enhance team effectiveness.

Winning the Service Game
Benjamin Schneider and David E. Bowen (Harvard Business School Press, 1995).

This book examines a variety of issues associated with delivering quality service, including what organizations must do to achieve a customer focus, how to manage personal and non-personal customer contact, and



how to create a service culture. A key insight is that treating customers only as end-user consumers of services is insufficient for those hoping to "win the service game." The key is to provide opportunities for collaboration and partnership—make them part of your organization.

Leadership and the New Science: Learning about Organization from an Orderly Universe
Margaret J. Wheatley (Berret-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 1992)

Our understanding of the universe is being radically altered by the new science' - the revolutionary discoveries in quantum physics, chaos theory, and biology that are overturning the models of science that have dominated for centuries. These become powerful models for how our organizations function, and how we can transform the way we organize work, people and life. This is not a hands-on book; rather, it delivers a message that has revolutionized the ways in which people look at organizations.

The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook
Peter Senge et al (Doubleday, 1994)

This companion piece to The Fifth Discipline (Peter Senge, 1990) is the most valuable tool box for building a learning organization. Group and solo exercises, systems stories, theories, and more lead the user through the five disciplines: Systems Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Shared Vision and Team Learning. It is an invaluable source of activities and understanding which is designed to be used, not just read.

Operations Management; Improving Customer Services
Richard J. Schonberger and Edward M. Knod Jr. (Irwin, 1993)

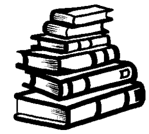
This book and others by this writing team are all well thought out, strong in practical methods and rich in real example that cross easily the divide between the worlds of private and public business.

The Deming Management Method
Mary Walton (Perigree, 1986)

This is a very accessible, easy to read and understand introduction and summary of Dr. Deming's approach to quality. It provides an overview of a Deming four-day seminar, gives two- to four- page summaries of each of Deming's Fourteen Points, discusses the Seven Deadly Diseases and Obstacles to Quality Improvement and includes nine case studies. You do not need to read the entire book to get valuable information; focus on a couple of the case studies and the section on the Fourteen Points.

Quality is Free: The Art of Making Quality Certain
Philip Crosby (Mentoer Executive Library, 1979)

Crosby invented zero defects' and a hands-on step by step process of quality improvement. The process is designed for a production environment (Crosby worked for ITT when he developed the process); many of the concepts, however, are transportable to much of the work done in a public service. Crosby's folksy writing and non-technical style reflect his "roll up your sleeves and get your hands dirty" approach. Special offerings are a fourteen step quality improvement process and a quality management maturity grid.



The Only Thing That Matters: Bringing the Power of the Customer into Your Business
Karl Albrecht (Harper Business, 1992)

This book moves quality improvement from the domain of production and product to the arena of customer service. Key concepts (such as quality, TLC, moment of truth, and cycle of service) alone defined throughout the book make it worth reading. There are excellent applications for a service environment.

State Quality Institutes and Programs

Thirty-four States have quality institutes and/or award programs in place to recognize organizations that meet high standards of quality, customer satisfaction, and achievement of results. The majority of the state programs are patterned after the Baldrige Award. Many States have expanded their award programs to include public agencies as well as private for-profit and non-profit businesses. Some also provide training, resource materials, and self-assessment approaches which may be useful even for organizations not intending to immediately apply for the award program.

Alabama Productivity Center
Linda Vincent
(205) 348-8994

Arkansas Quality Award, Inc
Barbara Harvel
(501) 373-1300

Arizona Quality Alliance
Dennis Sowards
(602) 655-1948

California Center
for Quality
Susan Lancari
(916) 322-3590

California Council for
Quality and Service
Thomas D. Hinton
(619) 491-3050

Connecticut Award
for Excellence
Ernest Nagler
(800) 392-2122

Connecticut Quality
Improvement Award, Inc.
Sheila Carmine
(203) 322-9534

Delaware Quality
Consortium, Inc
Michael J. Hare
(302) 739-4271

Florida Sterling Council
John Pieno
(904) 922-5316

Pacific Region Institute
for Service Excellence (Hawaii)
Dr. Phyllis Horner
(808) 545-4355

Lincoln Award for Business Excellence
(Illinois)
Heather McWilliams
(312) 258-4074

Louisiana Quality Foundation
Reba Harrington
(318) 473-6453

Massachusetts State Quality Award
Jerold Christen
(617) 275-1200

Maryland Center for Quality & Productivity
Amit Gupta
(301) 405-7099

Margaret Chase Smith Library (Maine)
Kartha Cordioli
(207) 474-0513

Michigan Quality Council
William Kalmer
(810) 370-4552

Minnesota Council for Quality
Carl Gabor
(612) 851-3181

Excellence in Missouri Foundation
John Politi
(314) 526-1725

Mississippi Quality Award
Center for Quality & Productivity
William M. Barnett
(601) 982-6739

North Carolina Quality Leadership Award
Mette Leather
(919) 872-8198

The Edgerton Quality Award Program
Nebraska Department of Economic Development
(402) 471-4167 or (800) 426-6505

Nevada Quality & Productivity Institute
Katrina Ekedahl
(702) 798-7292

New Hampshire Quality Council
Thomas P. Gilmore
(603) 427-2280

New Jersey Quality Achievement Award
Ed Nelson
(609) 777-0939

Quality New Mexico
Michael D. Silva
(505) 242-7903

Excelsior Quality Award
New York State Dept. of Labor
(518) 457-6747

Oklahoma State Quality Award Foundation, Inc.
Michael Strong
(405) 841-5295

Oregon Quality Initiative
Timothy Dedlow
(503) 224-4606

Pennsylvania Quality Leadership Foundation
Beverly M. Centini
(717) 561-7100

Rhode Island Area Coalition for Excellence
Lynn Couture
(401) 454-3030

South Carolina Quality Forum
Carol Crowe
(803) 599-2990

Tennessee Quality Award
Marie B. Williams
(800) 453-6474 or (615) 279-0037

Quality Texas
Cynthia Wisehart
(512) 477-8137

Utah Quality Council
Con Whipple
(801) 538-3067

U.S. Senate Productivity & Quality Award for Virginia
Jyl Smithson
(703) 231-3347

Washington Quality Council
Lois Quinn
(509) 324-2534

The Enterprise

The Enterprise is a voluntary membership network of best-in-class' employment and training organizations that serve the dislocated worker. Enterprise members are committed to superior performance, customer satisfaction, and continuous improvement in conducting their business.

Members were certified after submitting an application which has many similarities to the criteria in the Baldrige Award and the Simply Better! Self-Assessment System. In addition to demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement practices, they also meet two threshold standards of performance: 80 percent placement rate and 75 percent favorable customer satisfaction rating.

In July 1995, 104 substate areas serving dislocated workers were appointed as Charter Members Enterprise.

For information about the Enterprise, please call Doug Holl at 202-501-5440.

The Pioneers

The Pioneers are publicly funded employment and training organizations, at all levels of quality and sophistication, which have committed to learning what it takes to grow and improve.   Over 200 state and local organizations have committed to achieving high performance, improving customer satisfaction, and instituting continuous improvement.   Staff from Pioneer organizations participate in ongoing training focused on helping them implement customer-driven improvement efforts.   Pioneer sessions have been held throughout the past 18 months all over the country.

For more information on the Pioneers, please call Tom Comer at 202-501-5440.

The Simply Better! Team

There are five Simply Better! Product Development Teams from organizations around the country working with over 50 front-line agencies to guarantee the quality and ease-of-use of our products. The larger Simply Better! movement includes private industry councils, private sector service providers, employment service agencies, state agencies, community colleges, and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration. Active Simply Better! Team members are:

Jim Aaron, ETA National Office
Mike Brauser, ETA Seattle Regional Office
Barry Bridge, ETA Philadelphia Regional Office
Ann Cole, ETA Dallas Regional Office
Dennis Cole, The Private Industry Council, Portland Oregon
Liz Coley, Arbor, Inc.
Pat Cummins, The Governor's Employment and Training Department, Virginia
Kit Donahue, ETA Philadelphia Regional Office
Dana Durfee, ETA San Francisco Regional Office
Joe Fischer, ETA National Office
Anna Hall, ETA Dallas Regional Office
Nancy Hawkins, ETA Atlanta Regional Office
Doug Holl, The Enterprise
Bill Janes, ETA Seattle Regional Office
Rosemary Kafara-Cowan, ETA Seattle Regional Office
John Ladd, ETA New York Regional Office
Ric Larisch, ETA National Office
Mike Lawrence, North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission
Steve Malliaras, OIG San Francisco Regional Office
Nola Penn, ETA Chicago Regional Office
Ray Poet, ETA Boston Regional Office
Dan Pompilii, OIG Philadelphia Regional Office
Niall Rogers, ETA Denver Regional Office
Barak Rosenbloom, ETA Seattle Regional Office
Gabe Ross, Arbor, Inc.
Linda Sansom, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry
Steve Seninger, University of Montana Bureau of Business and Economic Research
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Barry Weiss, OIG Philadelphia Regional Office
Frank Wilson, ETA Kansas City Regional Office

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Joe Ganci, OIG Philadelphia Regional Office
Pat Murr, Berks County Pennsylvania,
Maureen Thompson, TPIC, Portland Oregon

The Simply Better! Learning Network

Welcome to the Simply Better! Learning Network. An important aspect of continuous improvement is the effective spread of learning and information. By becoming an active member of the Learning Network, you will be taking part in an important dialogue between organizations and individuals about how to do what we are doing better and better! Copy this form and fax it back to us. We look forward to hearing from you.

Seattle

U.S. Department of Labor
Employment and Training Administration
1111 Third Avenue, Suite 900
Seattle, Washington 98101-3212
206-553-7700
206-553-0098 (fax)

TPIC

Maureen Thompson
The Private Industry Council
720 SW Washington
Suite 250 Portland, Oregon
97205-3504
503-241-4600
503-241-4622 (fax)

Name

Organization

Address

Phone Fax Email

○ We completed the Simply Better! Self-Assessment and it helped us to:

○ We are interested on sharing our experiences with others who are considering doing the Self-Assessment.

○ We are interested in assisting other organizations which are using the Self-Assessment System.

○ We are interested in training others in how to plan and conduct the Self-Assessment.